

The Western Community Centre working towards Para Kore – Zero Waste

Earth's resources are finite. Everything that we use and have comes from Ranginui, Papatūānuku and their children. Humans are the only species on the planet that don't live by zero waste principles. The natural world does not create waste. Everything at the end of its life, whether it's a plant or animal, becomes part of another system. A dead insect becomes kai for another insect, a tree that falls in the bush rots and provides nutrients to the earth for new growth. Everything in nature is part of a closed, continuous, endless cycle.

The Para Kore programme works with marae, and organisations to increase the reusing, recycling and composting of materials, thereby, helping to reduce the extraction of natural resources and raw materials from Papatūānuku. Pine Campbell, Para Kore Kai-awhina, imagines a world where every product is created in a way that regenerates our environment.

“A world with healthy soils, diversity of species, healthy ecosystems, cultural food gathering practices, clean rivers, safe food grown locally, plenty of resources, and people enjoying happy lives” says Pine.

Zero Waste is a call to action that aims to end the current take, make, and dispose mentality of human society. Zero Waste is a policy, a path, a target. It is a process, a new way of thinking. Most of all it is a vision. It's a new planning approach which closes the loop, so that all waste is a resource for another process.

The Western Community Centre, based in Nawton, has been participating in the Para Kore initiative for almost 2 years now.

“Para Kore helped us with both education and resourcing to assist us in limiting our waste output, and then how to use that knowledge to help educate others” says Neil Tolan, Manager at the Western Community House.

The Western Community Centre is a focal point for information, venue hire, resourcing and support to a number of agencies, organisations, schools, families and individuals, with over 60,000 visits annually. 72 unique services and programmes are offered each year for all ages to improve the quality of life for the residents of Hamilton. 115 community groups, clubs, organisations, schools and churches use the venue each year. The Centre takes a lead role in highlighting the importance of supporting their local neighbourhoods and is in constant dialogue and works together with local community groups, organisations, schools, churches and police. This together with services, events and family support facilitated by the Centre contribute to the wellbeing of the community.

“Through the Para Kore initiative, we were able to reduce the costs for rubbish pickup, reduce the amount of our waste going to landfill, begin a program of caring for the environment ensuring future generations wouldn't be left with such a large mess to clean up, and use the opportunity as an educational tool for the children in the community” says Mr Tolan.

“2 years on we've halved our waste going to landfill while at the same time the Community Centre has had twice as many bookings” says Mr Tolan.

Children in the community have been taught worm farming and waste minimisation. Worms are spreading across Nawton. Nawton is doing its fair share to reduce landfill waste.

If your organisation or marae is interested in a free presentation from a Para Kore Waste advisor, contact Pine Campbell, pine@parakore.maori.nz